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Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 56/39 of 7 December 2001, requested the Secretary-General to continue to enhance contacts with the Economic Community of Central African States, with a view to encouraging and harmonizing cooperation between the United Nations and the Community. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-seventh session on the implementation of that resolution.

The present report contains information received from various departments, offices, bodies, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system on their activities related to their cooperation with the Economic Community of Central African States since the adoption of the above-mentioned resolution.

* A/57/150.

** The delay in submitting the present report is due to the lengthy period needed to receive input from various units.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in compliance with the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 56/39 of 7 December 2001. It contains information received from various departments, offices, bodies, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system on their activities related to their cooperation with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) since the adoption of that resolution.

2. In its resolution 56/39, the General Assembly, inter alia, commended those States Members of the United Nations and United Nations organs, organizations and agencies which have maintained or strengthened their cooperation with ECCAS or have begun to cooperate with it with a view to achieving peace, security and development. The Assembly invited those States Members of the United Nations and United Nations organs, organizations and agencies which have not yet established contact or relations with ECCAS to consider doing so; welcomed the financial, technical and material support given to ECCAS by the international community and emphasized the importance of appropriate cooperation between the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, and ECCAS; once again requested the international community to consider seriously increases in its financial, technical and material support to ECCAS to enable it to implement fully its programme of action and to respond to the needs of the subregion for reconstruction and recovery; urged all Member States and the international community to contribute to the efforts of ECCAS to achieve economic integration and development, promote democracy and human rights and consolidate peace and security in Central Africa and to implement the goals, targets and commitment of United Nations conferences and the United Nations Millennium Declaration, in particular, to strengthen the role of women in the development process.

3. Moreover, the General Assembly welcomed the reforms which ECCAS is carrying out, in particular the implementation of its programme of action to enable it to tackle more effectively the problems of cooperation and regional integration; urged the international community and the United Nations agencies to continue to provide those countries of ECCAS in which a process of national reconstruction is taking place with appropriate assistance to consolidate their efforts towards democratization and the consolidation of the rule of law and to support their national development programmes; and declared itself convinced of the importance of well-conceived global development strategies in order to avoid conflicts and disturbances. Furthermore, the Assembly recognized the value of international cooperation and efforts to restore and maintain peace and emphasized that the international community should continue to help those countries which receive refugees to meet the resulting economic, social, humanitarian and environmental challenges. It urged the United Nations and the international community to help to strengthen the means existing in the region to ensure that ECCAS has the necessary capacity with regard to prevention, monitoring, early warning and peacekeeping operations and invited the international community to consider supporting the creation of special economic zones and development corridors in ECCAS, with the active participation of the private sector. Finally, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to enhance contacts with ECCAS, with a view to encouraging and harmonizing cooperation between the United Nations and the Community and to report to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session on the implementation of the resolution.

4. ECCAS, which has its headquarters in Libreville, was established in 1983, initially with the goals of promoting economic development and integration and fostering a common market among member States of the Central African subregion. Recognizing that economic progress could not be achieved in a climate of conflict and crises, these goals were later expanded to include efforts to promote peace and security. ECCAS comprises 11 Central African States with a combined population of approximately 100 million inhabitants and covers a land area estimated at over 6 million square kilometres.[1]

5. The United Nations has remained committed to assisting ECCAS achieve its goals of promoting sustainable peace and development in the Central African subregion. To that end, the various departments, offices, bodies, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system have been cooperating closely with ECCAS member States, both individually and jointly, in various areas, including to promote confidence-building measures, peace, reconstruction and development both within individual member States

and at the subregional level. This synergy for peace and development between ECCAS and the United Nations is certain to continue to grow as Central African States strive, in cooperation with the United Nations, to move away from conflict towards durable peace and development.

II. Action taken by the United Nations system

A. Department of Political Affairs

6. The Department of Political Affairs has maintained close cooperation with the member States of ECCAS, in particular through regular contact with ECCAS officials to discuss peace and security in the subregion. This arrangement has provided valuable opportunities to exchange views and share experience and expertise on issues of mutual interest, including in the areas of conflict prevention, crisis management, peace-building and election monitoring. In this connection, the Department stands ready to consider how best the United Nations can assist ECCAS facilitate the functioning of its Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, its Early-Warning Mechanism (mécanisme d'alerte rapide de l'Afrique centrale (MARAC)) and its Multinational Force for Central Africa (Force multinationale de l'Afrique centrale (FOMAC)).

B. Department of Peacekeeping Operations

7. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has continued its exchange of views with ECCAS to identify areas of cooperation in peacekeeping. The Department remains prepared to cooperate with the subregional organization in such areas as exchange of information, establishing standards for and assisting in conducting peacekeeping training, sharing experience in other peace support activities and facilitating contacts with those member States that can provide support in enhancing the peacekeeping capacity of ECCAS. Through the subregional organization, its member States would be encouraged to participate in the United Nations Standby Arrangement System for peacekeeping in the region as well as other parts of the world.

C. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

8. Since 1994, cooperation between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and ECCAS has grown steadily. The recommendations on the basis of which the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa was established in Yaoundé, were indeed spearheaded by ECCAS and the ministerial conferences of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. Since the establishment of the Subregional Centre, ECCAS has actively participated in launching the activities and programmes of the Centre. Subsequently, in order to enhance collaboration between the Office and ECCAS further, a memorandum of understanding for joint cooperation in the areas of human rights and democracy was signed in July 2002 between the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General of ECCAS. As a result, a firm basis for continued interaction has now been established between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and ECCAS. The provisions in the memorandum of understanding will enable the two institutions to undertake periodic consultations jointly, exchange information in the areas of human rights and democracy and enhance technical cooperation aimed at promoting greater capacity in the subregion.

D. United Nations Development Programme

9. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has continued to assist in strengthening the institutional structures of ECCAS through capacity-building studies, such as those on the establishment of a self-funding autonomous mechanism of institutions of integration in Central Africa. Various studies have also been conducted in several areas, including customs, trade and industry. In addition, UNDP is assisting ECCAS in promoting and strengthening its integration process by funding a number of projects in the subregion, which are being implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Economic Commission for Africa. In the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), it is envisaged to undertake various subregional studies on the various aspects of

the NEPAD plan of action, including the subregion's needs for the development of infrastructure. At the same time, UNDP has continued to provide financial and logistical assistance to the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, including by supporting its 15th, 16th and 17th ministerial meetings, held in Kinshasa and Bujumbura, and its meeting of Military Chiefs of Staff, held from 18 to 20 March 2002. UNDP also provided assistance in the establishment of the subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy.

E. United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

10. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has been providing technical support to six ECCAS member States through normative and operational activities promoting sustainable development in human settlements and poverty reduction through the implementation of the UN-Habitat agenda. The eradication of poverty has become a central objective of development cooperation for UN-Habitat. In the subregion, the agency promotes an integrated approach to urban poverty eradication, which includes broad-based consultation as well as community participation and empowerment, and addresses poverty through improved governance, capacity-building and access to basic services and shelter. During the reporting period, UN-Habitat provided technical support to governments implementing the following actions: formulation of national housing policies and preparation of housing programmes (Chad, Central African Republic); improved access to basic services by the poor (Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo); reinforced national/local capacities to coordinate sustainable development programmes (Cameroon); and city development strategies, including safer cities components (Cameroon).

11. UN-Habitat has been supporting rehabilitation and reconstruction in post-conflict areas within a long-term development perspective in several Central African States, including Burundi, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. In particular, the agency has supported resettlement programmes for internally displaced persons, especially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, by establishing a linkage between emergency response and rehabilitation activities as a part of a transitional phase within National Emergency Programmes for Humanitarian Assistance. UN-Habitat is also assisting Rwanda to improve access to and control over land and property for women, as part of the Secure Tenure in Post-Conflict Environment Programme. As governance is an important cross-cutting issue that promotes sustainable development, UN-Habitat is supporting the Government of Cameroon to improve urban management, in order to increase its capacity to provide sustainable livelihoods, with safe and more secure living environments and a better quality of life for the urban poor. Other initiatives in the field are aimed at addressing specific aspects, such as gender-awareness campaigns, development of strategic partnerships and/or policy and normative changes.

12. UN-Habitat has also assisted Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda in the rehabilitation of basic infrastructure systems and in the delivery of these services. Assessments are being undertaken to expand the Water for African Cities initiative, a joint UN-Habitat/United Nations Environment Programme effort. Moreover, UN-Habitat joined humanitarian agencies to provide an appropriate response to the recent volcanic eruptions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that undertaking, the UN-Habitat programme strategy aimed at linking relief actions to medium- and long-term development.

13. The Nairobi-based Information Services of UN-Habitat have produced a considerable amount of information (inter alia, publications, reports, studies, best practices and brochures) to serve as learning and methodological tools to promote the development of sustainable human settlements and adequate shelter for all. Specific information kits have been produced for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

Notes

[1] Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.